

Message Text

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51

ACTION EA-06

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AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, PINR, TH, BM

SUBJECT: RELEASE OF KACHIN INDEPENDENCE ARMY (KIA) LEADER
ZAW SENG

REF: A) FBIS D090223Z NOV 74

B) BANGKOK 13896

C) BANGKOK 11851

SUMMARY:

BURMESE DISSIDENT LEADER ZAW SENG WAS RELEASED IN NORTH THAILAND AFTER THAI POLICE HAD HELD HIM FOR ABOUT THREE MONTHS ON AN IMMIGRATION CHARGE. THAI NARCOTICS POLICE DID NOT QUESTION HIM ON NARCOTICS MATTERS AND THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WAS COMPLETELY LEFT OUT OF HIS RELEASE. THIS CASE DEMONSTRATES ONCE AGAIN THAT THE THAI BUREAUCRACY OPERATES AT CROSS PURPOSES WITH RESPECT TO BURMESE DISSIDENT GROUPS. END SUMMARY.

1. REF A REPEATS A NOVEMBER 9 "BANGKOK POST" ARTICLE WHICH REPORTS THAT ZAW SENG HAS BEEN RELEASED NEAR THE BURMESE
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BORDER IN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE. "THE NATION" OF NOVEMBER

9 REPORTS THAT ZAW SENG WAS RELEASED OCTOBER 31 AFTER THE SUPREME COMMAND INTERVENED ON HIS BEHALF. RELIABLE INFORMATION CONFIRMS THAT ZAW SENG AND HIS BROTHER ZAW TU HAVE BEEN RELEASED AND HAVE REJOINED THE KACHIN INDEPENDENCE ARMY (KIA) IN NORTH THAILAND AS OF NOVEMBER 3.

2. POLICE COLONEL CHAWALIT YOTMANI, DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CENTRAL NARCOTICS BOARD, TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE POLICE HAD NOT QUESTIONED ZAW SENG ON NARCOTICS MATTERS. IMMIGRATION POLICE HAD ARRESTED HIM ON AN IMMIGRATION CHARGE AND TURNED HIM OVER THE SPECIAL BRANCH. POLICE NARCOTICS OFFICIALS WERE NOT CONTACTED, NOT DID THEY MAKE ANY APPROACH OF THEIR OWN TO THE DETAINING AUTHORITIES. CHAWALIT COMMENTED THAT ALTHOUGH THE 377 KILOS OF OPIUM SEIZED ON 16 APRIL 1974 WAS KNOWN TO BELONG TO THE KIA, THE POLICE COULD NOT ESTABLISH A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ZAW SENG AND THIS SEIZURE.

3. A KEY MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) OFFICIAL TOLD US NOVEMBER 6 THAT HE DID NOT KNOW ABOUT ZAW SENG'S RELEASE. HE PRESUMED THAT ZAW SENG WAS STILL IN JAIL AWAITING EXTRADITION TO BURMA. ANOTHER MFA OFFICIAL TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER EARLIER THAT HE HAD HEARD THAT ZAW SENG HAD BEEN RELEASED AFTER A SUBSTANTIAL SUM OF MONEY CHANGED HANDS. WHEN QUESTIONED ABOUT THIS SUBJECT NOVEMBER 12, THE SAME MFA OFFICIAL BACK AWAY FROM HIS EARLIER STATEMENT, SAYING HE WAS UNABLE TO CONFIRM EVEN THAT ZAW SENG WAS EVER ARRESTED. HE ADDED THAT THE GUB HAD REQUESTED THE EXTRADITION OF ZAW SENG AND ZAW TU, AND THAT THE MFA HAD PASSED THE REQUEST TO THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR IN THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND WAS AWAITING A REPLY. HE ALSO SAID THAT IT IS MFA POLICY TO DENY POLITICAL ASYLUM TO BURMESE REBEL LEADERS AND TO SEND THEM OUT OF THAILAND, BUT SOME OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE THAI BUREAUCRACY REGRETTABLY DO NOT FOLLOW THIS POLICY. THE OBVIOUS CONCLUSION IS THAT MFA WAS LEFT OUT OF THIS RELEASE, JUST AS THE NARCOTICS POLICE WERE LEFT OUT OF THE INTERROGATION.

4. COMMENT: FOR WHATEVER REASONS, THAI POLICE ARRESTED ZAW SENG IN JULY 1974 AND RELEASED HIM THREE MONTHS LATER.

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IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE EXISTED TO CONVICT HIM ON NARCOTICS CHARGES UNDER THAI LAW EVEN IF SUCH AN EFFORT WERE MADE. NOR DID HIS ARREST SERIOUSLY DISRUPT KIA SMUGGLING OPERATIONS ACROSS THE THAI-BURMA BORDER. NEVERTHELESS, HIS RELEASE IS EMBARRASSING TO THE MFA WHICH IS TRYING TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE GUB. THIS CASE DEMONSTRATES ONCE AGAIN THAT RTG POLICY ON THE BURMESE DISSIDENTS IS UNCOORDINATED, AND THAT ELEMENTS OF THE

THAI BUREAUCRACY OFTEN OPERATE AT CROSS PURPOSES.
KINTNER

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